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ABSTRACT

It was hypothesized that organizational participants have one of four preferred power balancing styles--Independent Style, Outside Interests Style, Organization Man Style, or Collegial Style--and further hypothesized that such styles have biographical correlates and that certain styles will tend to be overrepresented in organizations. The Situation-Reaction Checklist was developed for measuring the preferred power balancing style of faculty members in one large school, in a university, and in two community colleges. Subjects were asked to respond to the mailed questionnaire, and a panel of raters at each of the institutions also assigned each subject to one of the four style categories. Statistical analysis of the data, showing close correspondence between subject and panel ratings, showed considerable proof of the existence of power balancing styles among college faculty. Biological correlates of styles were also demonstrated, and the groups were heavily biased toward Styles III and IV. The Style III (Organization Man) person (characterized by building of organizational dependency on the individual through hard work and flattery of superiors) is older, stable, pro-administration, and supports major cultural values. The Style IV (collegial) person (favoring unions or informal pressure groups) is young, anti-administration, less accepting of major cultural values, and has had a career path with an early calling. (JT)

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Individual Power Balancing Styles in Organizations

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INDIVIDUAL POWER BALANCING STYLES IN ORGANIZATIONS

While the importance of social power in the study of organizations has been recognized by Baldridge (1971), Hind (1971), Thompson (1967), Scott (1967), Kahn and Boulding (1964), and March (1955) among others, this recognition has produced little in the way of empirical investigation of power in organizations. Emerson's (1962) power-dependence theory has attracted favorable notice from a number of scholars who have incorporated it into their own theories. Thompson (1967), Secord and Backman (1964), Heskett, Stern, and Beier (1970), and Thompson and Van Houten (1970) have all used Emerson's work extensively, as did Blau (1964). As noted above, however, like the other theories of power, Emerson's theory has produced little experimental investigation.

The focus of this research is upon the reactions of participants in higher education over whom power is wielded. Emerson (1962) demonstrated that the power of one individual, A, over another individual, B, is a function of B's dependency upon A. Further, he showed that dependence is directly proportional to B's demand for what A provides and inversely proportional to B's alternative sources of supply for that input. From this model, Emerson derives four ways in which B, the low power person, can act to equalize or balance the power in the A-B relationship: reduce own demand, find alternative sources of supply, increase the other's demand, and decrease the other's alternative sources of supply. He calls these ways of equalizing power "power balancing operations" and he demonstrates that

based on the theoretical constructs of his model, any action B can take to equalize the imbalance of power must fall into one of the four categories.

This research hypothesizes that organizational participants have one of Emerson's power balancing operations as a preferred power balancing style, that such styles have biographical correlates, and that certain styles will tend to be overrepresented in organizations. A brief description of each power balancing operation as a power balancing style follows:

Independent Style: The low-power actor reduces his demand for things provided by the high-power actor. In organizations this can be seen in those who refuse to become dependent upon others, who ignore attempts to influence them. (I)

Outside Interests Style: The low-power actor finds alternative sources for the gratification of his needs. In organizations, those using this style will predominantly meet their dependency needs off-the-job. (II)

Organization Man Style: The low-power actor endeavors to get the high-power actor to increase his dependency upon the low-power actor. Organizationally, this style is characterized by the building of organizational dependency upon the individual through hard work and flattery of superiors. (III)

Collegial Style: The low-power actor attempts to deny the high-power actor access to alternative sources of gratification for the needs being met by the low-power actor. In organizations, this is done by the formation of unions or informal pressure groups. (IV)

For the sake of brevity, the four styles will be known by their roman numerals, as Style I, Style II, Style III, or Style IV.

Choosing Style I or II has the effect of reducing one's own dependency upon the organization while leaving the organization's dependency upon the individual low. Such choices reduce one's overall involvement in the organization and may eventually lead to resignation or termination. On the other hand, choosing Style III or IV increases the organization's dependency upon the individual while leaving one's own dependency upon the organization

relatively high. This has the effect of increasing one's overall involvement in the organization and its centrality in one's life. Theoretically, and in practice, organizations tend to reward Style III and IV behaviors more than Style I and II behaviors. Therefore, Styles III and IV should be relatively more common among organizational participants.

Research Design

It was decided to attempt to measure the subject's predisposition to action by asking him to report his most probable response to a series of realistic but hypothetical organizational situations in which he was the low-power actor. In addition, a panel of the subject's peers reported which of the four styles was most characteristic of him. Thus, two independent measures of his typical power balancing style were obtained. If substantial agreement between these two independent measures can be demonstrated, it can then be stated with some assurance that power balancing styles do exist, for individuals in an organizational context.

Data were collected from the faculty of one large school in a university and from the faculties of two community colleges. After omitting administrators, panel members, part-time faculty, those with less than two years of service, and those unknown to a majority of the panel, some 324 faculty members remained available for the study.

A panel of raters was selected at each of the three institutions, the criteria for selection being wide acquaintance with the faculty of their respective schools. In an individual interview setting, with the researcher, the panel member assigned each subject to one of the four style categories. Panel members reported little difficulty in doing this task.

An instrument, the "Situation-Reaction Checklist," was developed for this study. It contains, in its final form, twenty-six items each of which has four alternative choices. Each item poses a situation in which a college faculty member is faced with a power confrontation in which he or she is the low-power actor. The subject is asked to respond by selecting which of the four alternative reactions most resembles what he or she would do in that situation. Each of the four responses corresponds to one of the four power balancing styles and each item contains a response identified with each style. A sample item follows:

> 1. The Academic Senate has petitioned the school for higher salaries, the reply is that funds are simply not available. Not believing this, your best action is to . . .
>
> a. Try to live on your present salary.
> b. Seek outside sources of income.
> c. Seek additional responsibilities or promotion for more pay.
> d. Actively support collective faculty action.

In this example, choices a. through d. represent Styles I through IV, respectively and in order.

The instrument development process will now be described. An original list of over 30 questions was written from the theory. This original instrument was pretested at a small Northern California community college. As a result of the pretest, further instrument development was indicated. The pretest results were analyzed by the Test Scoring Service at the University of Oregon, information was generated about item discrimination, internal reliability and validity, and an item response profile. Using that information, a revision was undertaken which resulted in certain changes in the instrument. The order of the four responses was altered on several items to reduce the probability of response set. Many items

were reworded to conform more closely to Emerson's power balancing constructs and to improve the situation-reality linkage.

Subsequently, sequential content validity checks were completed using groups of students. The four styles were explained to the students who were then given a copy of the instrument and asked to identify the power balancing style represented by each response to each item. This process was repeated three times with different students. After each "pass," the items and responses showing high levels of rater confusion were reworded or omitted. Selection accuracy improved with each validity check.

Data Collection

Panel data was pooled by institution so that composite ratings for each subject resulted. Following the collection of panel data, the Situation-Reaction Checklist was mailed to the home address of the subjects. Each was identified by code number, in an overt manner, and follow-up was undertaken to improve response levels. An overall response level of 66% was attained, considerably higher than the 40% to 50% which Kerlinger (1964) reports to be usual for mailed questionnaires. At the bottom of the last page of the Checklist, several biographical questions were posed in order to facilitate an investigation of the relationship between power balancing style and background variables. Background data was also collected from semi-public sources for the non-respondents, and a comparison was undertaken to determine if the two groups, respondents and non-respondents, were similar in nature. Analysis revealed that the two groups were similar on the parameters of gender and panel-designated style, but dissimilar on the level of education and academic field of study. On balance, it was decided that

the respondent and non-respondent groups were sufficiently similar to make generalization of the findings possible. An overrepresentation of professional and vocational school faculty in the respondent group may, as will later be seen, be a cause of the overrepresentation of Style III persons in the respondent group.

Data Analysis

The table below shows the relationship between the panels' style designations and the self-reported styles.

		Panel-Designated Style					
		I	II	III	IV	Tie	Total
Modal Self-Report Style	I	0*	3	4	0	1	8
	II	0	6*	2	0	0	8
	III	4	8	65*	9	9	95
	IV	5	11	34	36*	9	95
	Tie	0	3	4	1	0*	8
	Total	9	31	109	46	19	214

*Agreement: 107/214 = 50.0%

In both cases, the row or column labeled "Tie" represents a condition in which either subject or panel gave equal weight to two styles. Whatever the panel designates as a subject's style, the subject is most likely to disagree with the panel by self-reporting Style IV. There is much in academic life to suggest that social desirability factors predispose faculty to self-report Style IV, whatever their true preference may be. The table above is very useful as an overview of the data on power balancing style preferences.

A technique of statistical analysis was chosen which would demonstrate the existence, if any, of quite small differences in the proportions of Style I, Style II, Style III, and Style IV responses made by the subjects on the "Situation-Reaction Checklist." It would be expected that the mean number of Style I responses made by subjects in the panel-designated Style I group would be significantly greater than the mean number of Style I responses made by subjects in the other three panel-designated style groups, and similarly for the other three styles. From the point of view of instrument development, this approach is essentially a test of concurrent validity in that the instrument is being checked against observed behavior as reported by the panel.

What is suggested by this test is a series of four analyses of variance addressing four null hypotheses of the form:

H_0: There will be no significant differences among the Style III response means of the four panel-designated style groups.

If it is possible to reject these four null hypotheses at reasonable significance levels ($\alpha = .05$), it then becomes possible in each case to compute a Scheffe' post-hoc comparison of the four means. This test makes it possible to determine whether each of the means is significantly different from the other three. If it should be found, for instance, that the mean number of Style III responses made by the subjects in the four panel-designated groups are not equal, and if the number of such responses made by the subjects in the panel-designated Style III group is significantly larger than that made by any other style group, then it becomes possible to say that reasonable evidence for the existence of Style III has been produced.

Table 1

SUMMARY OF THE FOUR ANALYSES OF VARIANCE

COMPARING PANEL-DESIGNATED GROUPS AND SELF-REPORTED STYLE

Test for This Type of Response	Mean Number of Responses by Style Group*				Sig. Level
	Style I	Style II	Style III	Style IV	
Independent (I)	2.667	3.613	2.908	2.457	N.S.
Outside Interest (II)	3.667	5.452**	3.817	3.435	.01
Orgn. Man (III)	8.556	7.710	10.028**	6.587***	.01
Collegial (IV)	10.667	8.548	8.606	13.065**	.01

* The columns do not quite total to 26.00 because small numbers of items were omitted by some subjects.

** The Scheffe' test showed these means to be significantly larger ($\alpha \leq .05$) than the other three means in that row.

*** The Scheffe' test showed this mean to be significantly smaller ($\alpha \leq .05$) than the other three means in that row.

Note: The mean underlined in each row is the mean which was predicted to be the largest of the four means in that row.

As can be seen in Table 1, the null hypotheses could be rejected for three of the four response style tests. Persons designated by the panel as preferring Styles III and IV made, on the average, more Style III and IV responses respectively than were made by any of the other three groups and they made on the average more Style III and IV responses than they made any other single type of response. Subjects designated by the panel as preferring Style II made, on the average, more Style II responses than were made by any other group. They did not, however, make more Style II responses than they made Style III and IV responses. The calculated F value for Style I responses was not significant and differences among the four panel-designated groups in the mean number of Style I responses were quite small.

In addition, the Scheffe' test was applied to the smallest of the four means in each of the analyses of variance which produced a significant F value. This was done to determine if any one of the four groups displayed a marked aversion to one particular type of response. In only one case (out of 3) was one mean significantly smaller: subjects designated by the panel as preferring Style IV chose Style III responses significantly less often, on the average, than did members of the other three groups.

Nineteen biographical variables were compared with panel-designated style to determine which, if any, might predict style designation. Of these nineteen, fourteen were subjected to analysis of variance and five to chi-square analysis, depending on the level of measurement of the variable. Table 2 displays the results of the five analyses of variance which produced significant outcomes.

Table 2

SUMMARY OF THE FIVE SIGNIFICANT ANALYSES OF VARIANCE

COMPARING PANEL-DESIGNATED STYLE GROUPS WITH BIOGRAPHICAL VARIABLES

Biographical Variable	Mean Responses by Group				Alpha Value
	Style I	Style II	Style III	Style IV	
Age	51.000	43.968	44.771	39.913*	.01
Age at Degree	26.111*	32.032	33.716*	30.935	.05
Years at School	15.556	9.161	7.560	7.065*	.01
No. of Committees	1.778	1.323*	2.165	2.261	.01
No. of Clubs	1.667	1.097	1.147	0.674	.05

*Scheffe' tests showed these means to be significantly different from the group as a whole, at the level of α = .01.

Key:

Style I: Independent Style
Style II: Outside Interests Style
Style III: Organization Man Style
Style IV: Collegial Style

Table 3

CHI-SQUARE COMPARISON OF PANEL-DESIGNATED STYLE GROUPS

ON THE CRITERIA OF ACADEMIC FIELD AND MARITAL STATUS

ACADEMIC FIELD	PANEL-DESIGNATED STYLE GROUPS					TOTAL
	I	II	III	IV	?	
Professional and Vocational	4.54 3	15.64 13	55.10 70	23.20 17	9.59 5	108
Social Science	1.17 3	4.20 2	14.77 12	6.24 6	2.57 6	29
Humanities	1.93 2	6.66 14	23.41 13	9.88 14	4.08 3	46
Physical Science	1.30 1	4.48 2	15.78 14	6.66 9	2.75 5	31
TOTAL	9	31	109	46	19	214

Degrees of freedom = 12 Calculated X^2 = 36.7830

Tabular X^2 for df = 12, α = .05, is 21.03

MARITAL STATUS	PANEL-DESIGNATED STYLE GROUPS					TOTAL
	I	II	III	IV	?	
Married	7.48 5	25.78 24	90.67 99	38.26 38	15.80 12	178
Unmarried	1.51 4	5.22 7	18.33 10	7.74 8	3.20 7	36
TOTAL	9	31	109	46	19	214

Degrees of freedom = 4 Calculated X^2 = 15.7405

Tabular X^2 for df = 4, α = .01, is 13.2767

Since the calculated value exceeds the tabular value, the null hypotheses can be rejected for both of the above tests.

See Cotton (1974) for calculations demonstrating that the occurence of expected frequencies less than 5 in the above tables does not vitiate their significance.

It may, at this point, be useful to summarize by style category the biographical findings which proved, in Tables 2 and 3, to differ significantly from the sample at large. Inasmuch as n = 9 for the Style I group, those results should be viewed as extremely tentative and are stated here only for the sake of completeness.

Independent (I): Younger when last degree earned, more likely to be unmarried.

Outside Interests (II): Belong to fewer committees, more likely to be in the Humanities.

Organization Man (III): Older when last degree earned, more likely to be from the Professional and Vocational fields, less likely to be in the Humanities, more likely to be married.

Collegial (IV): Younger, fewer years at this school, more likely to be the Humanities, less likely to be from the Professional and Vocational fields.

In Table 3, the column labeled "?" indicates those few subjects for whom the panel members cast a tie vote for two styles.

Discussion of Results

Referring back to the original research questions, it was hypothesized that participants in higher education have one of Emerson's (1962) power balancing operations as a preferred power balancing style, that such styles have biographical correlates, and that Styles III and IV will be overrepresented in the class of organizations studied. Table 1 shows that, for Styles II, III, and IV, the instrument and the panel rating agreed too frequently to attribute to chance alone. Thus, considerable proof has been generated for the existence of power balancing styles among college faculty members. Tables 2 and 3 indicate biographical correlates of power balancing style, which further substantiates the existence of such styles. And

as can be seen in the data array on page 6, the proportion of subjects in each style category, whether panel-designated or self-assigned, is heavily biased toward Styles III and IV.

Based on the assumption of a relatively greater likelihood of consistent, systematic, intentional or unintentional bias on the part of a subject as opposed to the panel members, and the relatively smaller impact of any one panel member's bias when his or her responses were combined with those of other panelists, it was decided to use the panel categorization of the subject's power balancing style as the more accurate measure. In any event, the analyses of variance do show that the instrument can detect power balancing style to some significant extent in its present early stage of development. While the instrument is doubtless capable of much additional refinement to increase reliability and validity, at this point the "Situation-Reaction Checklist" has served its purpose in providing a second measure of power balancing style and proving the feasibility of such tests.

The summaries of the biographical findings for Styles III and IV, on p. 12, resemble two widely held stereotypes. The typical Style III respondent is an older, stable person who is pro-administration, a supporter of major cultural values (marriage, work ethic, etc.), and has had a career path with a late ceiling. By contrast, the typical Style IV respondent is the young, anti-administration person who is less accepting of major cultural values, has had a career path with a early ceiling, and chanpions colleague governance of his organization, perhaps primarily because he sees no other immediate way of influencing superiors. In other words, "the old guard" and "the young Turks."

Although some biographical variables did not prove to have the expected relationship to one or another style, those which are significantly related to style are mutually consistent and in no way violate the dictates of common sense. The finding that power balancing style correlates with almost half (7 of 19) of the personal and professional variables chosen for study here is certainly supportive of the existence of power balancing styles.

The pervasive background bias in the Professional and Vocational fields (education, business, agriculture, engineering, etc.) tends to be pro-management. That is, these fields share the attribute that they all approach their subject matter from the point of view of the administrator. This sympathy for, and empathy with, the problems of administrators outside the university setting apparently carries over into a feeling of alliance with the administrators of the schools within which they teach. This is reflected in the persistent selection of Style III by these subjects, and their identification with Style III by the panels.

Conversely, the underlying bias in the balance of the academic fields tends to be anti-administration and anti-hierarchy. This is seen in consistent identification of these subjects with Style IV, both in their self-reports and in the panel designations. It appears that this dichotomy between the Professional and Vocational fields on the one hand and the balance of the disciplines on the other parallels the long-standing conflict between the theoreticians and the applied fields: political science versus public administration, economics versus business, physical science versus engineering, to name but a few.

If, as indicated in these findings, individuals have power balancing styles, then several research topics are manifest at the individual level. How are power balancing styles developed, adopted, or chosen? At what rate and for what reasons do they change over time? What psychological and social psychological constructs do power balancing styles parallel? Is there a correlation between power balancing style and leadership style on the part of leaders, on the part of those lead? Can style be used to predict the success of administrators? Can style be changed systematically by training? If so, what types of training are most effective to that end?

The existence of power balancing styles also suggests several topics for research at the organizational level. For instance, what proportions of each style are customarily found in what types of organizations? Is there a relationship between style prevalence and the mission of an organization, or between style prevalence and organization structure? Can the style schema be used in designing jobs or in designing entire organizations? What is the usefulness of style measures in hiring and placement? Can style measures predict the success of a unionization drive in an organization?

It appears that the power balancing style concept may eventually have value in several areas of organizational life. It may lead to a better understanding of certain conflicts between individuals in organizations; that is, that they have differing views of the appropriate way in which to deal with the subordinate role. It may also prove to have usefulness in diagnosing conflict in superior/subordinate relations; when a superior who expects Style III behavior from subordinates is placed in charge of a group

the predominant value of which is Style IV, or vice versa. Likewise, it can have value in understanding the difficulties in merging existing groups or organizations, or merging new individuals into existing groups.

It may also turn out that one of the dimensions of group cohesiveness is the extent to which the members share a common power balancing style. It can likewise be speculated that the nature of the group's task will interact with the group's predominant power balancing style so that in task situations which require teamwork, groups with a predominant Style IV will function better than those with other predominant styles. For groups engaged in dead end jobs with no promotional future, a predominant Style II may be most functional to smooth operations. If several of these uses of the power balancing concept work out in practice, then a further extension to selection of personnel seems logical and inevitable.

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